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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002484

SIPDIS

DOD FOR U/S ZAKHEIM, DEPARTMENT FOR A/S WAYNE AND A/S
JONES, TREASURY FOR A/S QUARLES
EUR/UBI FOR S.HOLLIDAY, EB FOR BILL GRANT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/30/2008

TAGS: [EAID](#) [NL](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: RESCHEDULING US IRAQ CORE GROUP VISIT TO THE HAGUE

REF: A. STATE 270486

[1](#)B. 9/30 SOBEL-WAYNE AND SOBEL-ZAKHEIM TELCONS

Classified By: Ambassador Clifford M. Sobel for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Embassy recommends rescheduling proposed October 3 delegation visit to the Hague to ensure sufficient Dutch ministerial participation. We believe a White House call to PM Balkenende would significantly enhance the prospects for success. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Due to a Friday October 3 Council of Ministers meeting as well as an early morning special session on urgent EU matters, the GONL is unable to set up a suitable meeting at cabinet level for the U.S. delegation led by U/S Zakheim, A/S Wayne, and A/S Quarles. Ambassador Sobel prevailed on Deputy PM/Finance Minister Gerrit Zalm to agree to a very early morning breakfast and to make best effort to persuade other relevant ministers to attend. Zalm warned, however, that he and others could only be available for 30-40 minutes. Thus far, only one State Secretary has confirmed attendance.

[1](#)3. (C) Embassy recommends that instead of a stop on October 3, an appropriate senior USG team schedule a visit before the Madrid conference that will allow both the broad participation and the time necessary to persuade the Dutch cabinet to take a political decision to reverse policy on Iraq reconstruction. (Note: in circa April 2003 the Dutch cabinet notified parliament of a decision not/not to provide bilateral support for Iraq reconstruction. Instead, the GONL is spending EUR 65 million on troop deployment, EUR 21 million on humanitarian aid, EUR 3 million for seed money for Dutch companies in Iraq, and EUR 800K on police training. End Note.)

[1](#)4. (C) Because it will be a significant political decision for the GONL to agree to bilateral support for reconstruction, we believe our chances of success will be greatly enhanced if the U.S. delegation can meet at the ministerial level, and in a format that will allow adequate time to allow for discussions and ensure participation by all relevant ministries. We see an opportunity to build on PM Balkenende's extremely successful September 3 visit to Washington and recommend a phone call or message to the PM from the White House -- either President or Vice President -- urging that his government meet this challenge. Such a call would make clear to the GONL that the USG envoys to the Hague come at the White House's behest.

[1](#)5. (C) In the meantime, we propose to ask the Minister of Finance and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who we deem to be most sympathetic to our message, to begin advocacy at the October 3 cabinet meeting for a policy shift. We will reinforce the point that the stakes in Iraq are so great that we must succeed. We will press the Dutch to see this as a strategic necessity, not merely a financial or developmental problem. We would welcome additional guidance from Washington agencies in crafting our message to the Dutch cabinet.
SOBEL